

BASICS OF INTERVIEWING – ACTIONS

ABELSON LEGAL SEARCH

Punctuality

Need we say, “Be on time”? But, remember, “on time” actually means a few minutes early - leaving time to hang up your coat, check your smile, check your tie, hem or what ever, comb your hair, etc. In some buildings you must allow a couple of minutes for the elevator, a couple at the front desk, a couple more to get to the right floor; so, ten minutes before your appointment you should be in the building. If you are unavoidably detained, (*i.e.* the train breaks down, terrible traffic jam, etc.), call at the **first possible moment**. Be sure you have a working cell phone, change or a telephone credit card.

If you are the interviewer, you will show the same courtesy by being certain you are on time. Your interviewee probably is nervous: don't make it worse by making him/her wait.

Attire

Remember, your first impression is a visual one; the second is auditory and tactile; only the third is intellectual. Make sure your hair is clean and well cut/styled. This is not the time for mousses and gels. Check your jacket carefully for stray hairs, dandruff, etc. Be sure your shoes are well-polished. No run-down heels or broken laces, please. Wear your best suit or dress and jacket, freshly cleaned/pressed. Check your buttons, hem, etc. Your tie must be clean and well-pressed, best if silk and of a conservative design. Ladies should wear neutral colored stockings; some older attorney's, both male and female, still may think black stockings in the day have a certain connotation. Of course, stockings are free of runs (a spare pair in your briefcase). Gentlemen should wear dark, conservative socks, preferably unpatterned and over-the-calf, so when you sit no hairy legs. Either brush your teeth or use a breath spray or mints before the interview. If you are a smoker, heavy coffee drinker and/or had a hoagie with everything for lunch, you probably should brush your teeth and have a mint or two. If you wear cologne, male or female, it probably is smart to give it up for the day. If you feel “undressed” without it, apply it very, very sparingly. These “rules” hold for the attorneys on both sides of the desk/table.

Terms Of Address And Manner

It may be old-fashioned, but you'll never go wrong with “Yes, sir.” “No, ma'm.” Always refer to the interviewer/ee as Mr. or Ms or Mrs. **Do Not Assume a First Name** until you are invited to use one. If you're not sure how to pronounce a difficult name, ask and then repeat it carefully, to be sure you've gotten it right. Always be polite and friendly, professional in every way.

Be polite to the secretary/receptionist, taking care to call him/her by name, if possible, but never by her/his first name. Lots of attorneys seek information from staff members about the initial impression made by a candidate.

On introduction, shake hands firmly, but with concern for the other attorney's hand. This is not a grip strength contest. If you are the interviewer, of course you have risen from your desk to greet the interviewee and extended your hand first. Look the other attorney directly in the eye and speak clearly – either introduce yourself, or, if s/he has used your name first, respond with, “I am delighted to meet you Mr./Ms/Mrs. Attorney.” Do not sit down until invited to do so and shown where to sit, if you are the interviewee. The interviewer, of course, will remember to ask you to sit and indicate where.

On leaving, be sure to shake hands and say, “Thank you, Mr./Ms/Mrs. Attorney” to each lawyer and to each staff member.

Posture

This is not the time for lounging. Sit up straight – as far back in the chair as is comfortable for you. Don't perch on the edge. If it provides more comfortable support, you can sit slightly at an angle to the back so you can rest one arm on the chair's arm. Don't rest both arms. Ladies (aren't we all?), even if it feels a little strange, you will look much more graceful if you cross your ankles, not your knees (and you won't get varicose veins). Your skirt stays down and your feet don't stick out. Gentlemen, if you can, try not to cross your knees. It wrinkles your trousers and shows off too much sock (of course, you **are** wearing long socks, so there's no chance of seeing hairy legs!). Don't fidget – with your hands, jewelry, buttons, a pen, the arm of the chair, anything. Try to keep at least one hand loosely in your lap.

What To Bring

You have a copy of your resume, writing sample, transcripts, etc. in your brief case. Ladies –do not load yourself down with a giant handbag **and** a briefcase. For this one time, slip those things you just can't be without into your briefcase. If you don't own a good briefcase, borrow one.